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ABSTRACT

This article discusses in general terms derivational aspects of English vocabulary. Citing examples of Anglo-Saxon origin, the author provides a glimpse into the nature of the interrelatedness of English, German, and French vocabulary. (RL)

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German Vocabulary

Today I am going to talk about an aspect of the German language which has probably plagued you at some time or other during the semester: VOCABULARY. Unfortunately I won't be able to solve the mysteries of assigning der, die, or das to particular nouns, nor give you any reasons for the sometimes incredible length of some words in the German vocabulary.

Some of you may be familiar with the mythical Heinrich Schnibble who undertook to write a dictionary defining English words with his idea of their German counterparts --segments of this book have appeared in various national magazines. His particular brand of German is referred to as Deutscher Doubletalk or Twisted Teutonic. You will readily discover his method for increasing one's vocabulary with a sample of some of his definitions. For example, a school is a 'Teachenhaus' and students are a 'Teachenhausendonderheadenbunch', or more appropriate to the season, a football official ia a 'Backenforthengerunnenwhistle-getootenstartenstopper'.

The name of another writer is probably known to all of you: Mark Twain. Mark Twain had something to say on most all subjects and the German language did not escape his commentary. From his essay, "The Awful German Language", in which he comments about every undesirable aspect of learning German from the mastering of the

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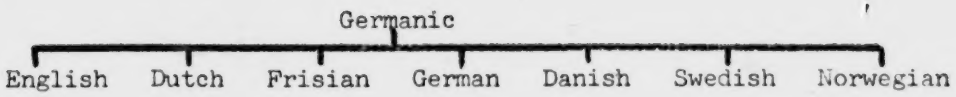
case system to verbs with separable prefixes, he has this to say about German vocabulary:

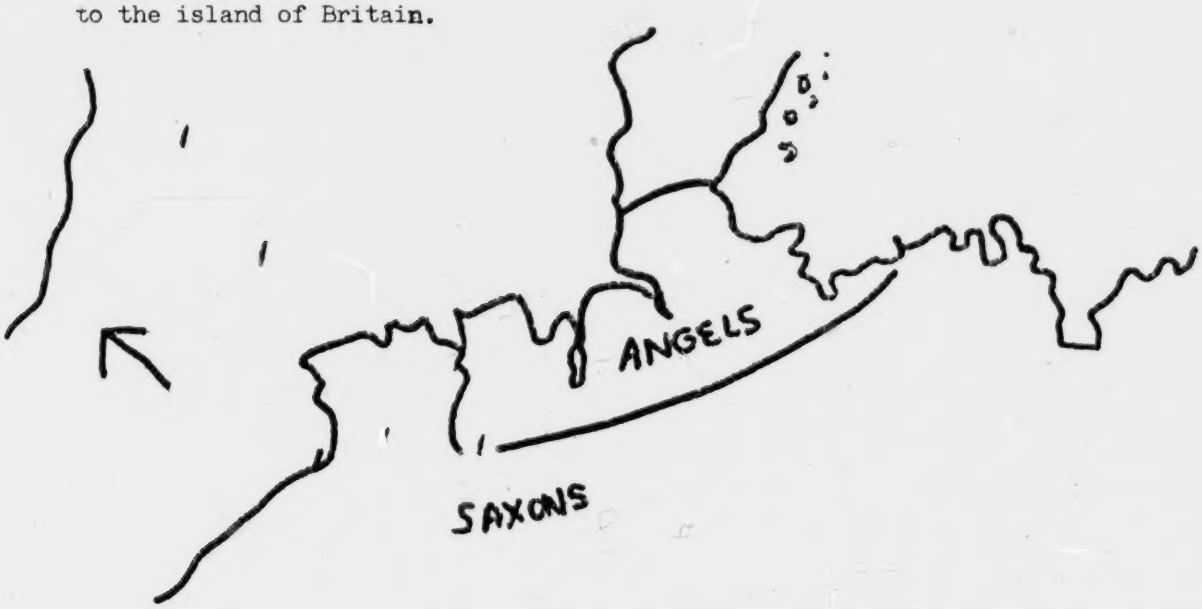
> ". . . a few remarks about one of the most curious and notable features of my subject -- the length of German words. Some German words are so long that they have a perspective."

An example of one of these words with 'perspective' is the German 'Unabhängigkeits erklärungen' which simply means 'declarations of independence'. Twain continues, "These things are not words they are alphabetical progressions; one can open a German newspaper any time and see them marching majestically across the page.-- Of course when one of these grand mountain ranges goes stretching across the printed page, it adorns and ennobles that literary landscape -- but at the same time it is a great distress to the new student, for it blocks up the way. . . . these long things are hardly legitimate words, but are rather combinations of words and the inventor of them ought to have been killed." Seriously, I hope to give you some clues about making intelligent guesses at or about confirming your suspicions concerning vocabulary items. The vocabulary with which we will be concerned has two main divisions: those words which are common to English and German and those borrowed words. More about this last category later.

You may remember from one of the earlier linguistics lectures this semester that German and English belong to a language family called Germanic. In terms of a simple genealogy these two languages are in a sister relationship:



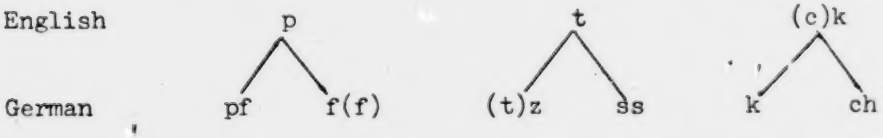
It might be appropriate to consider the origin of these two languages at this point. The English language developed as a result of the migration of certain tribes of people living in continental northern Europe. More specifically, part of a tribe called the Angels and one called the Saxons left the continent in the middle of the fifth century A.D. and crossed the English Channel to the island of Britain.



It is from the names of these two tribes that we get the descriptive term Anglo-Saxon, which is also the designation for the earliest stage of the English language, sometimes also referred to as Old English. The break away from the continental branch of the Angels and Saxons was complete enough that a separate language developed; however, it seems reasonable enough to expect that

these language might show similarities both in their structures and vocabulary items. The technical term for the similarities in vocabulary items is COGNATE. We can define a cognate as a word having in common the same original word or root as a word in a related language but differentiated by phonetic changes in the separate languages.

Let's look at three sets of consonant correspondences represented by their usual spellings in English and German. At first glance it may seem difficult to establish any regular pattern, but I am going to give you two rules to apply to each English consonant so that the German consonants will be the result. The English consonant will always be the input to the operation, and the German consonant the output. Parenthesis in the diagram indicate that the letter may appear in some words, but not in all words.



First consider the left side of each pair of German consonants.

p > pf

English	German
penny	r Pfennig
hopped	hüpfte
pound	s Pfund
pan	e Pfanne
apple	r Apfel
cramp	r Krampf

t > (t)z	English	German
	tide	e Zeit
	sit	sitzen
	set	setzen
	ten	zehn

(c)k > k	English	German
	cook	kocnen
	hack	hacken
	can	können

Two conditions can be observed from these pairs of words and might be formulated into a rule using the p > pf as a model

1 p > pf 1) p at the beginning of a word
2) p follows another consonant which can also be a p

The same rule applies if we substitute the t > (t)z series. In order to obtain the tz in sitzen and setzen we can use the -ing forms. You will notice that k does not make the same kind of shift as p and t in standard German. In the very southern part of of the German speaking territory in Switzerland the k shifts to a kch sound in the same environments. In standard German k remains k in initial sounds and following another consonant. The linguistic term for the German sounds produced from this rule is AFFRICATE, the combination of a stopped sound like p or t and a fricative like f or s. The two types of sounds in each pair are produced in the same part of the mouth.

Now let's look at the German correspondences on the right side of each pair:

p > f(f)	English	German
	hope	hoffen
	heap	r Haufen
	weapon	e Waffe

t > ss	English	German
	water	s Wasser
	eat	essen
	hot	heiß

k > ch	English	German
	make	machen
	awake	wach
	cook	kochen

If we examine the English words of the pairs, we see that p, t, and k occur after a vowel. The second rule might be formulated as the following:

2 When the English consonant follows a vowel, the result in German will usually be the fricative sound produced in the same place in the mouth. The sound may be spelled with a double consonant.

There are some other correspondences which are helpful in determining similarities in vocabulary items.

1. English d and German t as in the following pairs

day	r Tag
garden	r Garten
drink	trinken
blade	s Blatt

2. English v or f and German b as in these words

live	leben
life	s Leben
raven	r Rabe
even	eben
shove	schieben
navel	r Nabel
half	halb

3. English th and German d in

three	drei
think	denken
thumb	r Daumen

4. English gh and German ch in the pairs

night	e Nacht
brought	brachte
neighbor	r Nachbar

Let's look a little more closely at this last example of neighbor and Nachbar. The neigh- in neighbor is a variant in some dialects of English for the word nigh. This means 'near'. The Nach- in

Nachbar is the same root as in nächste which means 'next' or 'near'. The second part of both words, -bor and -bar comes from a root meaning 'dweller', so that your 'near' or 'next' 'dweller' is your neighbor.

An important part of vocabulary in addition to words which are native to a language is the borrowed terminology, words which are mutually intelligible to speakers of the language, but which are not native to the language itself. These words are popularly called 'loanwords'. It is possible to make a distinction between types of loanwords; first those words which have undergone phonological changes, having adapted themselves to the sound system of the borrowing language. In this respect it is sometimes difficult to separate non-native from native vocabulary. A second type of loanword can really be called a foreign word - a word which never totally adapts itself to the sound system of the borrowing language. Native speakers of a langauge will perceive these words to be foreign.

The reasons that foreign words remain a distinct category probably extends into the field of sociolinguistics. We know that the key element in making the distinction assimilated or foreign is the phonology, how a word or phrase sounds. What is the possible motivation for keeping the foreign pronunciation? One explanation may be the strangeness of the sound itself. The advertising medium zeros in on precisely this aspect in order to sell its product. An example is the use of the term 'blue jeans', pronounced

[blúh dschihns] . The j-sound as we have in English does not exist in native German words. Another plausible explanation for the retention of a foreign-sounding pronunciation is the conscious effort of the speaker to intentionally use a foreign word to maintain a certain amount of vagueness about whatever it is that he is discussing. Closely related to this attitude is the psychological-cultural motivation as a means of class division. Into this classification would fall the use of jargon or slang which belongs to any one segment of the society. Practically all aspects of German life show the infiltration of American English in some part of the vocabulary. In the business world and the field of labor relations there are the terms der or das Lockout and der Streik. Both of these examples are loans which have been assimilated into the German phonology. Notice how the loanword may vary in its gender designation.

A very interesting phenomenon in the fashion world is the term for 'hot pants'. The German has a perfectly good term, native in origin, heiße Höschen which is an example of a direct meaning transfer. The German word for pants is die Hose. When the suffix -chen is added on the meaning is changed to 'little pants'. Two years ago when hot pants hit the fashion world and were no longer considered short shorts the advertising medium in Germany, at least in Munich where I was at the time, used the German term with little success. However, sales increased when the advertisements carried the English term 'hot pants'.

The language of the drug culture comes exclusively from English as in these examples: der Drug Addict pronounced a bit differently you'll notice, but spelled the same. Then there is the adjective high and the verb with a separable prefix onturnen. As a matter of fact the majority of the loan terminology in present-day German is borrowed from American English. A recent publication in paperback titled Kennen Sie die neuesten Wörter is supposed to have all the latest borrowed terminology.

In the area of sports terminology German again borrows heavily from English as in der Sport or the verb dribbeln. During the Olympics the TV broadcasts were at times transmitted via sattelite, and this type of broadcast is called a Live-Sendung. This kind of loan demonstrates a partial adaption to the phonology, but the v remains more a voiced sound where a native German word ending with this type of consonant would have a voiceless f.

Another motivation for borrowing a word or phrase into a language is to give a name to an object or concept which is new to the culture. Where the borrowing language has no suitable term for the object or item, it borrows the name along with the item; for example das Popcorn. Der or das Yoghurt is a curious word -- if you ask enough native speakers of German about the gender of this word you may get three different answers! Some terminology in all languages becomes international in scope: philosophical terms come from Greek, musical terms from Italian, and mathematical terms from Arabic.

Now that we have discussed some of the motivations for borrowing, what is the nature of the culture which does the borrowing? From a geographical standpoint borrowings might occur where two different languages come into fairly constant contact with each other. Usually of these two cultures only one of them does a great deal of borrowing. It may also be the case that the borrowing culture feels itself in some way inferior to its neighbor. An advantage that the borrowing culture has is that it becomes bilingual. Often this feeling of inferiority is accomplished through the political superiority of the lending culture. Going back in history to the time when the Romans occupied German territory, we discover that they brought with them the apparatus for making wine. Der Wein is a loanword from the Latin vīnum, although probably no native speaker of German today would consider it a loanword.

Related languages will not only show similarities in vocabulary but also similarities in the structures of the language, the grammatical matters. These similarities in the grammatical structure which languages share is one of the criterion for saying that they belong to the same language family. Political subjugation to a culture which feels itself superior leaves its mark usually only in matters of vocabulary. English vocabulary contains a great many words of French origin. It is estimated that 70% of the English vocabulary by word-count is of French origin.

This great invasion of the French language goes back to the victory of William the Conqueror in 1066. The Normans being the victors got all the good jobs, and of course had no need to learn the language of the people they conquered; they could all get along very well in French. French became the language spoken in the higher social classes, but this of course had no effect on the common people. French political dominance died out, but the presence is still felt in the vocabulary. Let's compare briefly the German, the English, and the French terms for parts of the body. Frequently the English and French terms are loans from Latin.

der Finger	finger	le doigt	Engl. noun digit (lat. digitus)
die Hand	hand	la main	Engl. adj. manual (lat. manualis)
die Schulter	shoulder	l'epaule	Engl. noun epaulet (lat. spatula)

Statistically 70% of the English vocabulary is of French origin, 15% of it is of Germanic origin and the remaining 15% from various sources. The vocabulary of everyday speech is 95% Germanic in origin.

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